DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 234 559 EC 160 426

AUTHOR Reynolds, Roger R.
TITLE The Learning Disabled Student in a Television and Radio Announcing Course: Alternative Techniques for Teaching Mass Communication to Learning Disabled Students in the University.
INSTITUTION Central Washington Univ., Ellensburg. Instructional Media Center.
SPONS AGENCY Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 82
GRANT G008006929
NOTE 20p.; A part of the HELDS Project (Higher Education for Learning Disabled Students). For related documents, see EC 160 414-430.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Broadcast Industry; *College Students; Course Content; Higher Education; *Learning Disabilities; Radio; Teaching Methods; Telecommunications; Television
IDENTIFIERS *Higher Education for Learning Disabled Students

ABSTRACT

A professor of broadcasting describes accommodations he has made for learning disabled students in his course as a result of involvement with the HELDS (Higher Education for Learning Disabled Students) program. A case study of an LD student illustrates the progress made by the student through emphasis on articulation and pronunciation, use of taping equipment, and use of different learning modalities. The techniques, it is explained, have helped non-LD students as well. An outline is appended for the course on radio-TV announcing, and a behavioral checklist for LD adults is included. (CL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED234559

THE LEARNING DISABLED STUDENT IN A TELEVISION AND RADIO ANNOUNCING COURSE

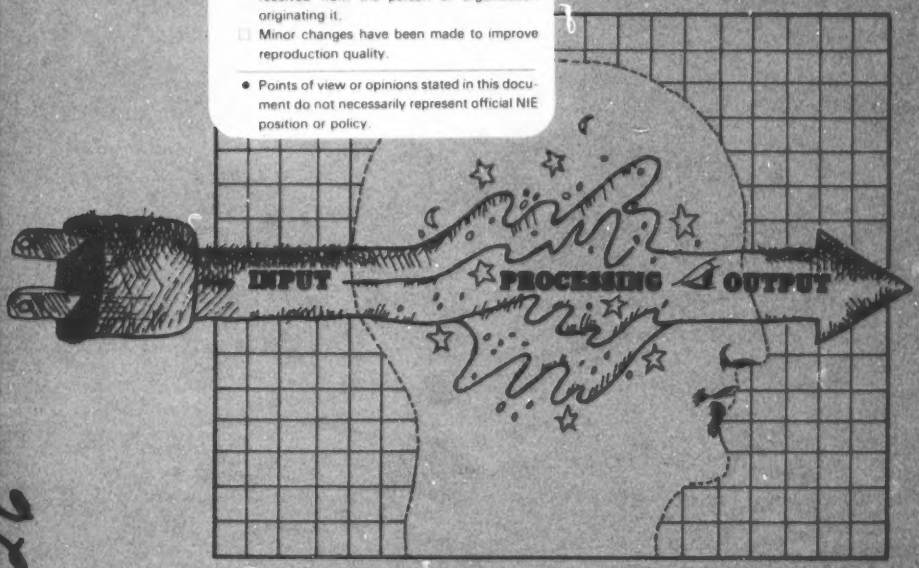
by
Roger R. Reynolds

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.



EC160426

THE HELDS PROJECT SERIES
CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

THE LEARNING DISABLED STUDENT IN A TELEVISION AND RADIO ANNOUNCING COURSE

Alternative Techniques for Teaching Mass Communication to Learning Disabled Students in the University

by
Roger R. Reynolds
Assistant Professor of Mass Media
Central Washington University

HELDS Project
(Higher Education for
Learning Disabled Students)

Instructional Media Center
Central Washington University
Ellensburg, Washington
1982

FIPSE (Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education)
Project Number 116CH10305

Grant Number G008006929

Director Myrtle Clyde-Snyder

© 1982, Central Washington University

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Donald L. Garrity, President
Donald E. Guy, Dean of Students
Mike Lopez, Assistant Dean, Minority Affairs
William Schmidt and the
Central Washington University
Media Production Department

Participating Faculty

Marco Bicchieri, Anthropology
E. E. Bilyeu, Foreign Language
Ken Briggs, Health Education
Gerald Brunner, Technical and
Industrial Education
Owen Dugmore, Psychology and Counseling
Roger Garrett, Communication
Darwin Goodey, Psychology
Helmi Habib, Chemistry
John Herum, English
Zoltan Kramar, History
Cheryl McKernan, Academic Skills Center
Jan Reinhardtsen, Special Education
Roger Reynolds, Mass Media
Catherine Sands, Anthropology
Frank Sessions, Sociology
John Utzinger, Philosophy
O. W. Wensley, Speech and Audiology
Karl Zink, English

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Participating Departments and Programs

Academic Skills Center,
Donald W. Cummings, Director
Anthropology, Ann Denman, Chair
Chemistry, Don Dietrich, Chair
Communications, Roger Garrett, Chair
Education, Robert Carlton, Chair
Educational Opportunities Program,
Mike Lopez, Director
English, Anthony Canedo, Chair
Health Education,
Kenneth A. Briggs, Director
Philosophy, Chester Z. Keller, Chair
Psychology, John Silva, Chair
Special Education, Dale LeFevre, Director
Sociology, Charles McGeehee, Chair
Technology and Industrial Education,
G. W. Beed, Chair

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Prefaces:

The HELDS Project at Central Washington University, Myrtle Clyde-Snyder 6

What is a Learning Disabled Student? Myrtle Clyde-Snyder 7

I. Introduction 9

II. The Strategy and How it Worked 10

III. Summary 12

Appendices 13

THE HELDS PROJECT AT CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

The acronym HELDS stands for Higher Education for Learning Disabled Students. It represents a model program funded for three years (1980-1983) by the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE), a division of the Department of Education. This project was funded as a model for other colleges and universities that are preparing to provide equal academic access for the learning disabled students.

Project HELDS had three major focuses. The first was to provide such access for the learning disabled student under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. This we did for learning disabled students, most of whom were admitted without modified requirements to Central Washington University. These students were not provided remedial classes. They were enrolled in classes with other college students. The help that we gave was habilitative, rather than remedial, teaching them how to compensate for their weaknesses.

The habilitative training began with identification of those who were learning disabled and included, but was not limited to, such support services as taped textbooks (provided through the services of our Handicapped Student Services Coordinator), readers, writers for tests, extended time for tests, pre-registration with advising to ensure a balanced schedule, the teaching of study skills and tutoring by tutors from the campus-wide tutoring program who were especially trained to tutor learning disabled students.

The second focus of the project was to give a core of twenty faculty teaching classes in the basic and breadth areas a sensitivity to the characteristics of students who were learning disabled so that they could modify their teaching techniques to include the use of more than one modality. This ensured an academic environment conducive to learning for the LD. The faculty members participated in monthly sessions which featured experts in the field of learning disabilities, and in the area of the law (Section 504) that deals with the handicapped student and higher education. There were several sessions in which Central Washington University graduates and currently enrolled LD students shared their viewpoints and experiences with the faculty members. As a result of this some faculty members used the students as resource people in developing curricula for their various disciplines published in this series.

The third focus of the project was to make the university community aware of the characteristics of learning disabilities and of the program at Central. It also sought to encourage other colleges and universities to initiate such programs.

WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABLED STUDENT?

People with learning disabilities have handicaps that are invisible. Their disability is made up of multiple symptoms that have been with them since childhood. Many of them have been described as "dyslexics," but if they are categorized as dyslexic, this will be only one of their many symptoms, as a sore throat is only one of the many symptoms of a cold.

Three concise descriptions of the learning disabled children are provided in Hallahan and Kauffman:

"The National Advisory Committee on Handicapped Children (1968) proposed the following definition, which was adopted by the 91st Congress:

> Children with special disabilities exhibit a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using spoken or written thinking, talking, reading, writing, spelling, or arithmetic. They include conditions which have been referred to as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, developmental aphasia, etc. They do not include learning problems which are due primarily to visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, to mental retardation, emotional disturbance, or to environmental disadvantage.

Task Force II of a national project (Minimal Brain Dysfunction in Children: Educational, Medical and Health Related Services, Phase Two of a Three-Phase Project, 1969) wrote the following two definitions:

> Children with learning disabilities are those (1) who have educationally significant discrepancies among their sensory-motor, perceptual, cognitive, academic, or related developmental levels which interfere with the performance of educational tasks; (2) who may or may not show demonstrable deviation in central nervous system functioning; and (3) whose disabilities are not secondary to general mental retardation, sensory deprivation or serious emotional disturbance.
>
> Children with learning disabilities are those (1) who manifest an educationally significant discrepancy between estimated academic potential and actual level of academic potential and actual level of academic functioning as related to dysfunctioning in the learning process; (2) who may or may not show

> demonstrable deviation in central nervous system functioning; and (3) whose disabilities are not secondary to general mental retardation, cultural, sensory and/or educational deprivation or environmentally produced serious emotional disturbance.[1]

Although the preceding definitions are concerned with children, the President's Committee on Employment of the Handicapped, in their booklet *Learning Disability: Not just a Problem Children Outgrow*, discusses LD adults who have the same symptoms they had as children. The Department of Education (Reference Hallahan & Kauffman) says that two to three percent of the total public school population are identified as learning disabled and that there are over fifteen million unidentified LD adults in the United States, acknowledging, of course, that people with this problem are not restricted to the United States but are found all over the world.

We know that many learning disabled persons have average or above average intelligence and we know that many of these are gifted. In their company are such famous gifted people as Nelson Rockefeller, Albert Einstein, Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Edison, Hans Christian Anderson, Auguste Rodin, William Butler Yeats, and Gustave Flaubert.

The causes of learning disabilities are not known, but in our project each of our identified learning disabled students shows either an unusual pregnancy (trauma at birth, such as delayed delivery, prolonged or difficult delivery) or premature birth. They oftentimes have a genetic family history of similar learning disability problems.

An exerpt from my *Criterion and Behavioral Checklist for Adults With Specific Learning Disabilities* has been included as Appendix A.

/s/ MCS
6 June 1982
Ellensburg, Washington

[1]Daniel P. Hallahan and James M. Kauffman *Exceptional Children* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1978), pp. 121-122.

I. INTRODUCTION

By now we should be quite comfortable with *physically* handicapped students in broadcasting courses. With minor adjustments, students with hearing defects, loss of sight, missing limbs or paralysis have managed to flow smoothly through most college broadcast curricula. Many have gone on to distinguished careers in the field. Perhaps it's easier when an instructor can see clearly what the handicap is and simply deal with the obvious. Also, both the physically handicapped student and the instructor can draw from a number of previous experiences in making necessary adjustments. When a person is physically handicapped, few would arbitrarily associate it with mental retardation. But in the case of the learning disabled (LD), erroneous associations are made with intelligence level.

The following account is based on my experiences with a learning disabled student in a television and radio announcing course. Knowing what we do about LDs and their frustrations, why would such a student want to take such a course anyway? The answer, "Because I asked him to."

He had a rich, baritone voice quality, the kind we know and refer to as a "Golden Throat." I had had him in another course the quarter before—Beginning Radio Production. He did poorly. He's accustomed to that. I didn't know he was learning disabled. Neither did he. Somewhere along the line, however, HELDS counseling made him aware there was a good reason for his frustrations in school. In other words, he really wasn't just another "dumb kid," However, when it comes to being on radio and television in a professional capacity, what you are is not as important as what people think you are. The listener or viewer is unmerciful. If you don't come across as professional, what you have to say does not carry a great deal of credibility. So here I am suggesting to this young fellow that he should at least give broadcasting a try. But that's what's so great about college. You can get exposed to a lot of different things in a short time in an atmosphere of safety.

Actually he had a sincere interest in broadcasting as a career. He wanted to be (shudder) a disc jockey. Like so many other students, he was excited by the thought of playing his favorite records for millions to hear. So we come to the basic need of announcing skills.

The next section of this booklet will be devoted to what was actually experienced in one quarter of announcing coursework. Knowing in advance that I had an LD student, I took it as a challenge to structure the course so as to accommodate him but not at the expense of others in the class.

It would be a challenge indeed because here is the BEFORE part of a hoped-for spectacular BEFORE-AFTER comparison:

1. Outstanding voice quality, the kind most male college-age aspir-

ing announcers dream about. This was intact, not to be changed, ready to use.

2. Poor articulation. Far below average. Tended to mumble as if he was afraid someone would understand what he said.
3. Total lack of vocal expression. Very few pitch changes or variation in loudness. A classic monotone.
4. Mechanical vocal delivery. Much hesitation between words and sentences as if he had to think between each.
5. Shyness in visual presentation. Very little eye contact with others. Constantly looking down. Rarely made facial expressions. Never smiled.

Since 40% of the grade in this course would be based on improvement, it would make things a bit more equitable for him. Most of the other students were far ahead in basic vocal skills.

II. THE STRATEGY AND HOW IT WORKED

As it turned out, my learning disabled student made great progress even before the quarter began. His knowledge that he was a full-fledged bonafide official LD appeared to relieve internal tensions. "So that's been it!" type of relief. My asking him to take a course—actually showing some interest in him specifically seemed to give him an air of confidence that I'd not seen before. He was smiling. You have to know that here was a person, who, because of an invisible handicap simply relegated himself to mediocrity. All through elementary and high school, regardless of effort, the best grade he could hope for was a derivative of "C." Reading and comprehension through the visual modality was so difficult he couldn't compete. Dubbed "slow," he was passed over by one instructor after another when it came time for a classroom contribution. In this case difficulty in reading skills was followed by difficulty in oral skills. As he explained it to me, what was read registered in his brain but was quickly forgotten as soon as the brain perceived a new idea from the reading. An LD specialist said that he not only had a visual perception problem (dyslexia), but had difficulty in processing what he had seen. He said gaining the same information by hearing it had better results. I didn't know what I could do about the comprehension problem, but I figured something could be done to improve his vocal skills.

The laboratory portion of the class was structured to allow students to practice drill material separately in private carrels. I could eavesdrop as well as speak to him through a headphone system. He could also tape his voice and my voice for comparison. When it comes to broadcast announ-

cing, each student has his or her own problems. So being learning disabled was no imposition on course procedure.

I worked with him first on phonemes—forcing him to overarticulate consonant sounds to compensate for years of over-assimilation. I demonstrated, he copied, it worked, I said "good." He beamed and smiled. It occurred to me that he had probably never heard that word much in school, at least directed to him. To build on that emerging confidence level, I went immediately to vocal expressiveness. However artificial it may be, the "Do what I do" approach worked beautifully. He found pitch ranges he didn't know he had. That, plus newly freed emotional responses, allowed him to impart meaning to radio commercials. The confidence level began to rise rapidly after hearing himself on tape as if to say, "That was me?"

After taping a 30 second piece of copy, he could memorize it quickly after playing it back a few times, thus using the aural modality with his own voice. Although it's not necessary to memorize radio copy, this helped him smooth out the reading and reduce the mechanical hesitations. All of this added further confidence, the lack of which, I think, was a major stumbling block in achieving success in his college level work. With his magnificent voice quality being manipulated with new found vocal techniques, he himself was labeling his work as good.

Next we worked on the visual element of television. Although difficult for him, keeping eye contact with the camera helped form better eye contact habits in everyday dyadic communication. However, the entry of a new element to be processed by his brain (computer) took its toll on articulation and vocal expression. Making everything work at once was a problem. When he concentrated on articulation, he could make all the sounds in General American Speech. When he concentrated on expression, the copy came alive but articulation began to revert back to its original state, and so on.

The learning process remained stable with our work on pronunciation. When it comes to pronunciation, the English language makes no sense anyway. So learning how to pronounce a new word (through the aural modality), memorizing it, and adding it to his vocabulary was a routine process. The same was true with the other students.

Only so much can be accomplished even with a gifted student in one quarter. Some things went untried. For instance, it was clearly demonstrated that he could correlate information more accurately through the aural modality. I wish I could have had him read the textbook chapters on tape then glean the information by listening to himself. My instructions would have been: "Read as articulately and expressively as you can so you don't bore yourself." The idea would have been to kill two birds with one stone.

Use of a different modality didn't always work. While the rest of the class took a written exam, I gave him the same exam in an adjacent room by reading him the questions. He had good answers but to the wrong

questions. This was even after he assured me each question was thoroughly understood.

However, to present material both orally and visually is a proven method. The course outline was prepared with the learning disabled student in mind. Rather than just handing it out, we went over it in class, thus using the oral modality as well. The course outline (Appendix B) demonstrates a functional "class as a whole" structure but easily accommodates a learning disabled student. When a textbook is used, a tape recorded version should be made available. Many institutions provide this service.

III. SUMMARY

In response to the HELDS Project objectives, I structured this class to better accommodate an LD student. By doing so, I believe an LD in the class improved his vocal skills in an atmosphere of caring and understanding. The needs of the rest of the class were met at the same time. In fact I still use the same course structure whether there is an LD student in the class or not. It simply meets individual needs better than a blanket group approach. The time devoted by the instructor is basically the same. As it turns out, the so called "normal" student is helped more too.

Gradewise, the LD student succeeded in the class because of tremendous improvement in vocal skills. But because the content of radio and television is everything but radio and television, the successful announcer must know more about everything than most everybody else. The subtleties of informing and persuading in the mass media go beyond mechanical technique. My LD student fell way short compared to the other students. I believe that it all goes back to elementary and high school failures.

Communicating a variety of subject matter to a varied audience on a daily basis must start with a broad general education. An LD student desiring a career in the broadcast communication field must have access to higher education basic and breadth courses that are not pedagogically stifling.

The HELDS Project at Central Washington University has opened my eyes to the fact that I may have had a number of learning disabled students in the past without ever knowing it. With increased knowledge of this disability, I should be able to recognize the problem more often and make adjustments to further the cause of learning.

Author's Address:

Roger R. Reynolds
Mass Media Program
Central Washington University
Ellensburg, Washington 98926
Telephone: (509) 963-3680

APPENDICES

Appendix A Criterion and Behavioral Checklist 14

Appendix B Course Outline 17

APPENDIX A

Criterion and Behavioral Checklist for Adults with Specific Learning Disabilities

1. Short attention span.

2. Restlessness.

3. Distractability. (The student seems especially sensitive to sounds or visual stimuli and has difficulty ignoring them while studying.)

4. Poor motor coordination. (This may be seen as clumsiness.)

5. Impulsivity. (Responding without thinking.)

6. Perseveration. (The student tends to do or say things over and over. Mechanism that says "finished" does not work well.)

7. Handwriting is poor. (Letters will not be well formed, spacing between words and letters will be inconsistent, writing will have an extreme up or down slant on unlined page.)

8. Spelling is consistently inconsistent.

9. Inaccurate copying. (The student has difficulty copying things from the chalkboard and from textbooks; for instance, math problems may be off by one or two numbers that have been copied incorrectly or out of sequence.)

10. Can express self well orally but fails badly when doing so in writing. In a few cases the reverse is true.

11. Frequently misunderstands what someone is saying. (For instance, a student may say, "What?", and then may or may not answer appropriately before someone has a chance to repeat what was said previously.)

12. Marked discrepancy between what student is able to understand when listening or reading.

13. Has trouble with variant word meanings and figurative language.

14. Has problems structuring (organizing) time -- The person is frequently late to class and appointments; seems to have no "sense of how long a "few minutes" is opposed to an hour; has trouble pacing self during tests.

15. Has problems structuring (organizing) space -- The student may have difficulty concentrating on work when in a large, open area -- even when it's quiet; may over or under-reach when trying to put something on a shelf (depth perception).

16. Has difficulty spacing an assignment on a page, e.g., math problems are crowded together.

17. Thoughts -- ideas wander and/or are incomplete in spoken and written language. Student may also have difficulty sequencing ideas.

18. Sounds -- A student's hearing acuity may be excellent, but when his brain processes the sounds used in words, the sequence of sounds may be out of order: e.g., the student hears "aminal" instead of "animal" and may say and/or write the "aminal."

19. Visual selectivity -- May have 20/20 vision but when brain processes visual information, e.g., pictures, graphs, words, numbers, student may be unable to focus visual attention selectively; in other words, everything from a flyspeck to a key word in a title has equal claim on attention.

20. Word retrieval problems -- the student has difficulty recalling words that have been learned.

21. Misunderstands non-verbal information, such as facial expressions or gestures.

22. Very slow worker -- but may be extremely accurate.

23. Very fast worker -- but makes many errors and tends to leave out items.

24. Visual images -- Has 20/20 vision but may see things out of sequence, e.g., "frist" for "first," "961" for "691." Or, a student may see words or letters as if they are turned around or upside down: e.g., "cug" for "cup," or "dub" for "bud," or "9" for "L" for "7," etc.

25. Makes literal interpretations. You will have to have them give you feedback on verbal directions, etc.

26. Judges books by their thickness because of frustration when learning to read.

27. Has mixed dominance: e.g., student may be right handed and left eyed.

28. Moodiness -- Quick tempered, frustration.

29. Cannot look people in the eyes and feels uncomfortable when talking to others.

30. Has trouble answering yes or no to questions.

Students with specific learning disabilities which affect their performance in math generally fall into two groups:

1. Those students whose language processing (input and output) and/or reading abilities are impaired. These students will have great difficulty doing word problems; however, if the problems are read to them, they will be able to do them.

2. Those students whose abilities necessary to do quantitative thinking are impaired. These students often have one or more problems such as the following:

A. Difficulty in visual-spatial organization and in integrating nonverbal material. For example, a student with this kind of problem will have trouble estimating distances, distinguishing differences in amounts, sizes, shapes, and lengths. Student may also have trouble looking at groups of objects and telling what contains the greater amount. This student frequently has trouble organizing and sequencing material meaningfully on a page.

B. Difficulty in integrating kinesthetic processes. For example, a student will be inaccurate in copying problems from a textbook or chalkboard onto a piece of paper. The numbers may be out of sequence or the wrong numbers (e.g., copying "6" for "5"). Problems may be out of alignment on the paper. Graph paper is a must for them.

C. Difficulty in visually processing information. Numbers will be misperceived: "6" and "9," "3" and "8" and "9" are often confused. The student may also have trouble revisualizing. i.e., calling up the visual memory of what a number looks like or how a problem should be laid out on a page.

D. Poor sense of time and direction. Usually, students in the second group have the auditory and/or kinesethic as their strongest learning channels. They need to use manipulative materials accompanied by oral explanations from the instructor. They often need to have many experiences with concrete materials before they can move on successfully to the abstract and symbolic level of numbers.

© 1981 All rights reserved Myrtle Clyde-Snyder

APPENDIX B
COURSE OUTLINE

MME 385
RADIO-TV ANNOUNCING
3 Credits

OBJECTIVES: Too many students who desire to become announcers find themselves practicing their mistakes. They don't know what they don't know. This course is designed to provide guidance on the way to professionalism. To become a commercial network announcer or newscaster as a result of one college course is impossible. It takes years of experience. However, without learning the basic skills of oral expression first, the subsequent years of experience won't help much.

The things that separate a first rate announcer from a second rate announcer are the ability to read aloud without stumbling, properly articulate the sounds of General American Speech, establish good habits when it comes to pronunciation, and control vocal quality and expression in a variety of situations.

These are merely the skills. It doesn't stop here. A first rate announcer must make an effort to understand the content of what is being "announced," understand the subtleties of informing and persuading a variety of listeners and have a genuine desire to communicate. Also, uniqueness of radio and television requires the understanding of microphones and getting used to speaking to an audience you cannot see.

The Instructor will attempt to cause the student to accomplish all this. It will take equal effort on the part of the student. Even if the student does not choose an announcing career, the effort will be of great help in the communicative tasks of everyday living.

TEXTBOOK: Hyde, *Television and Radio Announcing*, 3rd edition, contains chapters on communication, phonetics, articulation, pronunciation, interviewing, drill material on news, sports, and commercials.

INSTRUCTOR: Roger Reynolds, Assistant Professor of Mass Media, former R-TV newsman and free-lance announcer.

COURSE FORMAT: On the first day of class, each student will make an audition tape. After that, lectures and in-class exercises will be accompanied by lab drills based on the instructor's individual diagnosis. The Language Lab in L&L 104 allows up to 30 students to practice separately and receive private instruction without interfering with one another. Tapes are provided.

LECTURES: (will vary depending on class make-up)

Roles of communication
Professional careers
Variables of speech, physiology
Articulation, pronunciation and assimilation
Use of microphones and equipment
Interviewing
Vocal variety, timing, phrasing, pacing
Specific voice and articulation problems
Professional announcer examples
Film narration, working with scripts
Differences between radio and TV announcing

IN-CLASS EXERCISE:

Individual performances of: radio commercial
radio newscast
on camera TV news report

Vocal variety drills
Voice variables and breathing
Motion picture narration
Pronunciation skills

GRADING:

1. A written midterm will count 20% and cover everything from class lectures and assigned reading.
2. An oral final exam will count 20% and will cover learned articulation, pronunciation, assimilation and other vocal skills.
3. The face value performance of the commercial, radio and TV news reports will count 20%.
4. General improvement will count 40% and will include effort, understanding, class contribution.

19

HELDS Project
Myrtle Snyder, Director HELDS
Educational Opportunities Program
Central Washington University
Ellensburg, Washington 98926
(509) 963-2131
EEO/AA/TITLE IX INSTITUTION